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DENIES U.S. BID TO OUST LAOS DEFENSE CHIEF

Disapprove of Phoumi State Dept. Says

BY ROBERT YOUNG

(Chicago Times Staff Writer)

Washington, May 24 — The state department today denied a report that the United States has demanded removal of Gen. Phoumi Nosavan, the so-called strongman of Laos' royal government, but official sources disclosed this country has served official notice of disapproval of Phoumi's activities.

The state department also denied another report that the central intelligence agency is trying to get American policy in Laos and is working at cross-purposes with the department and other United States agencies in the Asian country.

President Kennedy met for an hour today with Secretary of State Dean Rusk and key advisers on far eastern problems. The White House described it as strictly a routine session.

The activities of Gen. Phoumi were prime topics in the session. One of the top-level advisers on the royal government of Laos, who was in Washington last week by N. Averil Harriman, assistant secretary of state for eastern affairs, and the Laotian ambassador, Tiao Tienpan.

Disapproval of Phoumi's activities was made official through a statement by the state department. The United States strongly disapproves Phoumi's efforts to stay in Laos and direct military operations, the statement said, when the country is seeking a neutral status.

The statement said Phoumi has created a new crisis in Southeast Asia, giving the Reds a chance of northern Laos and threatening the security of United States military forces in Thailand.

When royal Laos troops were retreating from the advancing Reds, Phoumi was accused of sending them to fight against the United States grant of \$1 million dollars a month which has been withheld since last February.

Harriman also was accused to have told the Laotian ambassador that Phoumi was

likely to join the leaders of the neutral and communist factions of Laos in demanding a coalition government and frustrating the objectives of the 1955 international conference on the country's independence.

Gen. Harriman's Counselor, Harriman, officials said, protested that if Phoumi gave more attention to his military duties and was less stubborn regarding negotiations for a coalition government, the royal government would be in a better position to negotiate with the other factions. One of the factors blocking productive negotiations has been the royal government's refusal to give up the defense and interior ministries.

Walter White, state department press officer, said today reports that Harriman demanded Phoumi's removal from the royal government were untrue. White said the state department has strongly urged, however, that the royal Lao government move ahead to negotiate promptly and realistically with the neutral and communist factions to form a government of national unity under a neutralist premier.

The United States has been withholding \$1 million dollars monthly grant in aid to the royal government since the king's flight from Laos.

The state department said it was not in a position to make any decision on whether to resume the grant until the royal government had agreed to negotiate with the neutral and communist factions to form a government of national unity under a neutralist premier.

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